DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 132 SP 002 370

Guidelines for Establishing Greater Student Voice in Teacher Education Through a Student-Faculty Committee. National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, Washington, D.C. Student NEA.

Note-7p.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.45

Descriptors-Administrative Organization, College Faculty, College Students, Committees, *Cooperative Planning, *Organizational Change, *Policy Formation, *Student College Relationship, Student Role, *Teacher Education

This general guide to the establishment of student involvement in teacher education decisionmaking includes a section on rationale, a general statement regarding the development of a philosophical base for establishing policy within the context of the goals of the institution, and suggestions for (1) ascertaining the need for a student-faculty committee by gathering data through formal evaluation of student needs, an open student forum, or informal student consensus; (2) working with the power structure to establish a student-faculty committee; and (3) applying change strategy to the committee's organization and the organization of teacher education. Included also is a "Special Note to Student NEA Regional Project Participants," which outlines the roles to be played by local, regional, and national representatives. (JS)

ED028132

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

# GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING GREATER STUDENT VOICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH A STUDENT-FACULTY COMMITTEE

## A Rationale

"Your college professor...doesn't care what you like, what your own personality is, or how you want to go about things." (Diane Potter, Student Impact, May-June, 1968, p.42).

"What I now hear my revolutionary friends saying is that you can't introduce teachers to new ways of teaching kids by using the old ways of teaching teachers. Teachers tend to perpetuate in their classrooms the way in which they themselves have been taught." (Upward Bound director in Boston, Teacher Education: The Young Teacher's View, NDEA National Institute for Advanced Study in Teaching Disadvantaged Youth, Project Report/two, p.11).

"If...they (students) are put in a field situation fairly soon, then they would know the areas in which they needed help. In that case, I would say they should have a legitimate and important part to play in planning their own curricula." (Gloria Bray, Student Impact, May-June, 1968, p.42).

"I feel that all too often academic policies are left up to faculty groups." (Robert Fussell, Student Impact, April 1968, p.28).

"I see the Student NEA playing a major role in the reassessment of teacher education programs...(It) can ultimately become the pioneer, the collaborator with schools of education in developing new learning experiences for all the people within the educational community." (Nolan Albert, Student Impact, May-June, 1968, p.38).

Insensitive professors, earlier classroom experience, irrelevancy of courses, and lack of student participation in policy decisions--all are contributing factors to the increasing demand for student voice in teacher education. Students who are preparing to be teachers are concerned about their preparation process and desire to have their questions answered and concerns met.

In essence, students want to play their representative role in the teacher education community. They believe that all of the elements of a community should have adequate representation in decisions affecting the total community, that those who are asked to comply with decisions should participate in the making of those decisions. However, in most cases the democratic idea of equal claim to power by members of the community has been stunted. Although majoritarian democracy may not prevail on the campus, the university, by virtue of its intellectual freedom of inquiry, still has the substance of a democratic culture and should assure the members of the institution a role in the decision-making process that determines the fullfillment of the goals and purposes of the institution. However, there is an artificiality about the university community for it is "deliberately arranged so there is a stratification of

SP002370

relationships based on experience."[1] Students feel that a community can flourish only by drawing on the strengths of its total membership, and that they as students have a particular expertise that is necessary in the decisions that will govern the community.

## General Statement

The development of greater student participation in the decision making process of teacher education must be based upon a consensus by all elements of the teacher education community that student involvement is important enough to be considered part of the total democratic and educational process of the institution, and that it is compatible with the purposes of the university community. If serious apprehensions exist about the degree to which the policy of involvement constitutes a threat to the primary academic functions of students and the faculty, the effort to secure involvement will falter at every turn. On the other hand, if it is commonly agreed that an opportunity for students to advise on and share in administrative policy decisions is valuable in building a strong institution, a strong faculty, and an understanding loyal, and democratically oriented student body, then there is good chance for success.

Whether a policy of involvement will succeed or fail depends primarily on two factors: the care with which a philosophical base for a policy is established within the context of the goals of the institution, and the knowledge on the part of everyone of just how comprehensive it is intended to be.

## General approach to student involvement in university decision making

There are two possible approaches to student involvement in university decision making: obtaining student representation on existing departmental committees or creating a new committee with student and faculty representation, charged with the responsibility of ensuring that students are consulted on matters of importance to them. A committee of this second type should be viewed as a forerunner to a more comprehensive, across-the-board participation of students in decision making and should be the forum in which such participation is systematically planned.

The program should not try to encompass too much at the start. There is much to be learned in the first few efforts and a responsibility once taken cannot be easily or lightly dismissed.

### A. Ascertaining the need for a student-faculty committee.

Before launching an effort to have a student-faculty committee established, some basic data should be collected on student opinion regarding the following: Are students interested in gaining an effective voice in teacher education policy decisions? Why should they? Do they really lack an effective voice? What would be the most effective vehicle for students to have a voice? How would teacher education be improved if students were to gain an effective

---

[1]Report of the Study Commission on University Governance, The Culture of the University: Governance and Education. University of California, Berkeley. January 15, 1968, p.32.

voice?[2] Seeking answers to these questions will help determine whether the students on a particular campus really have a contribution to make to their preparation process, and the information will prove valuable in "making the case" for student involvement.

The data should be gathered by a small group of interested students and faculty. There are a variety of methods that can be used in gathering the needed information:

1) Formal evaluation of student needs. A random sampling of students in the education department could not only provide data about student interest in having a voice, but could also suggest some areas in need of reform. Faculty members could be consulted on the design of the questionnaire to be used.

2) An open student forum (e.g. at a monthly SEA meeting). Holding a meeting expressly for the purpose of dialogue between students and faculty on the preparation process has proved to be an enlightening experience for both groups. Such candid discussion would suggest constructive reform to meet the total needs of the institution.

3) Informal student consensus. By listening to students wherever they gather, valuable feedback from students can be obtained. Although this method is not quite as valid as the other two, it has a certain value since many students will react more candidly in informal gatherings. (STUDENT IMPACT--this Student NEA publication is capturing, for the first time, the opinions of students who are preparing to teach. Although it reflects what education students across the country are saying about their preparation process, some of the information may be germane to particular campuses. However, it should only be used to supplement data from primary sources--the students on the campus.)

If the information indicates that not all the needs of students are being met and that a formal representation of student opinion is needed, the justification for a student-faculty committee exists. A variety of methods can be used to select the committee members (i.e. election, delegation of responsibility, etc.). However, it is important that the individuals chosen be keenly committed to representating student opinion.

B. Working with the power structure to establish a student-faculty committee.

Since any reform or change of significance will ultimately have to be reviewed by a departmental committee, it is necessary to analyze the power structure. How does the department make decisions? Who are the strong leaders in the decision making process? Which departmental committees are working in what areas? What are the strengths of the various faculty members? In short, how are decisions made regarding teacher education, and who makes them?

---

[2]Don Roush, Academic Vice President, University of New Mexico, Las Cruces, "How to Gain an Effective Student Voice in Teacher Education," mimeographed, Student NEA Summer Conference 1968, p.1.)

"Decisions are made every day that affect the teacher education program. Therefore, it should be relatively easy to examine the decision making process. For example, assume that there has been a recent change in the curriculum. Trace the decision making process by answering the following questions: What prompted the change? Who suggested it? When was it first discussed? Who discussed it? What groups or individuals took action on the change? Who implemented the change? Such analysis of action will assist in defining the power structure."[3]

Every group has its own set of values and philosophies which serve as criteria for priority setting and decision making. Understanding these values and philosophies will enable you to speak directly to them in seeking your own objectives. The strengths of the faculty should be known so that every alliance benefits the cause--rallying to a professor who has no effective voice in the decision making process will not help your efforts.

Some colleges may already have student representation on current departmental committees, albeit ineffective. If this is the case, work through established channels (i.e. the dean, local adviser, an influential professor, local SEA president) to express why students feel that this representation is not effective and suggest possibilities for change that would meet the needs as outlined by the data you have gathered. Some of the reasons for ineffective representation might be: the method of selecting the student representative; the frequency of committee meetings; or the possibility that students "rubber stamp" the administration's ideas rather than suggesting their own for discussion. If student "representation" has been sanctioned, students should make sure that it is effective!

In working with the power structure do not try to impose a preconceived plan. Be prepared to work with current projects or ideas from the administration that could be adapted to your needs. Do your homework and present your case constructively and positively. By emphasizing the items that you agree on (i.e. a program meeting the needs of every future teacher, the best program that will prepare teachers, etc.) an atmosphere conducive to progress can be developed. Do not be afraid to admit that on certain points you may be wrong. This does not mean you have to acquiesce the basic philosophy of your student voice program.

Additionally be prepared for the necessary "red tape," be aware of the proper channels within the establishment, and work effectively within that structure. Be able to demonstrate concretely what are the needs of the students and the willingness of the committee to respond to them.

C. <u>The essentials of the process of change.</u>

The success of any effort to initiate change is directly related to the commitment of those involved. However, success is also related to the degree of organization behind the effort. Two basic elements in organization are the ideas and the individuals promoting them.

---

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.2.

What makes an idea take root and grow to fruition? There are several conditions: The quality of the idea itself; how well defined it is; effective diffusion (communication) of the idea from individual to individual (e.g., through chapter meetings, dorm sessions, student-faculty "fireside chats," seminars); and the eventual spread of the idea throughout the departmental system.[4]

For purpose of strategy, the individuals involved in nourishing idea from conception to implementation can be viewed as falling into several categories. First there are the change agents, the people who are able to communicate the idea and to influence others. They are the ones who "make it safe for others to follow." Their strategy is basically as follows: a) program the change to fit the cultural values of the system; b) assist people in understanding the need for innovation and in evaluating the idea; c) communicate the idea clearly to assure that people know what its practical implications are; and d) concentrate attention on those who show early interest.[5]

Second, there are the adopters--those who finally implement the idea. They fall into the following categories by degrees of responsiveness to the idea: "early adopters, early majority, later majority, and laggards."[6]

What are some of the main obstacles to effecting change? One is the lack of sufficient data to support the need for innovation. Hence the case for a student-faculty committee must be well documented through student polls and information from Student Impact, from books which support the needed change, from research studies that have been conducted, and from other pertinent materials. Another obstacle is the absence of change agents. If a campus chapter or the staff of a teacher education program lacks change agents, the probability of gaining a student voice in teacher education is slim. However, once a need for student voice has been established, make it known that students will have a platform on which to express their views. It takes only a small core of students and faculty to excite and persuade others. In looking for change agents, make sure they have the time and commitment to do something. They may not be from the local leadership because of their preoccupation with other responsibilities.

After the initiation of the idea, target dates should be established for achievements of the following objectives: gathering of the data; selecting of the student-faculty committee; meeting with administration; identifying action steps for change; evaluating the effectiveness of the committee's work; and publicizing its work in the campus newspaper.

---

[4] Ibid., p.3.

[5] Ibid., p.4.

[6] Ibid., p.3.

## Conclusion

The preceding material is only a suggestive way to effect student voice in teacher education via the establishing of a student-faculty committee. It is by no means a panacea to the problem. In order to be successful students will have to use it only as a general guide, for every situation is different. However, in general the answer to the question of how to gain an effective student voice in teacher education through a student-faculty committee is relative to the ability of those involved to defend the challenges of basic assumptions, the ability to analyze the power structure, and the ability to apply change strategy to the committee's organization and the organization of teacher education.

## SPECIAL NOTE TO STUDENT NEA REGIONAL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

In developing this pilot project, it is important to know the roles that will be played by the local, regional, and national representatives so that each will understand the other's responsibility.

LOCAL:

1. Establish student faculty committee on the campus.

2. Submit reports on the status of the project to the regional coordinator, outlining areas in which assistance is needed.

Deadlines: October 21--initial contact report outlining problem areas where assistance is needed
December 4--intermediate evaluation
April 7--final evaluation.

3. Use guidelines and other supplementary material to assist in establishing student voice.

4. Keep detailed logs on student efforts.

REGIONAL:

1. Cordinate the project in the six pilot institutions.

2. Act as direct consultant to students in pilot projects.

3. Evaluate status reports and determine needed consultant assistance in problem areas.

4. Develop evaluation process with national office.

5. Submit final evaluation report to the national office.

6. Be responsible for regional financial commitment.

7. Work with state consultant in assisting in problem areas.

NATIONAL:

1. Provide financial assistance to the regional project to cover expenses of regional planning, the cost of consultant help to pilot institutions, special request for money from pilot areas, and a final publication on the project.

2. Provide consultant help and suggestions for additional resources to assist in establishing student voice via the student-faculty committee.

3. Publicize final evaluation so that others may benefit from outcome of the project (e.g., in Student Impact).

4. Provide direct assistance, through personal and professional contacts, to help expedite the communications between student and faculty in the pilot institutions.

5. Develop evaluation process with regional coordinators.